

Questions for Myth and Theology seminar 2/17/77:

In the chapter on "Meaning" in Method in Theology, you speak about the role of language in ordering what we can attend to and therefore what we can ask about (pp. 70-71). This reminded me of your discussion of the "censor" in Insight (pp. 190ff). The censor also selects and patterns the elements that enter consciousness. This ordering of one's experience by one's language and by one's censor seems to operate prior to the act of intelligent insight that is constitutive of understanding in your cognitive psychology. If this is so, does this imply an operative but usually unattended to conceptual framework prior to intelligent insight, which would seem to imply further that understanding sometimes precedes insight, and that understanding is not always an act (Insight, p. ix) but is sometimes merely a "capacity to go on" (Littgenstein)? Are any of the above possibilities compatible with your cognitive psychology?

J.D.

1. Insight is the process of ordering what we can attend to and therefore what we can ask about.  
 Censor is a way of organizing what we attend to.  
 Censor is not a barrier, it's a filter.  
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2. Censor: wearing clothes  
 Sky: we aren't what it is, what it is for  
 just Taboo - don't do it - don't do what it would do.

3. Incredible technology of human consciousness  
 I don't believe I'd ever been before  
 & was prepared for it  
 History of philosophy  
 whole life of spirit

Images - insight  
 memory - insight  
 language - insight  
 whole - insight

11/11

1

The ordering of one's experience by one's language

a) Impression without expression is incomplete

MT Helen Keller, ancients' esteem for the name p. 70

b) deliberate focusing of attention without a name for the object is difficult: what are you trying to do?

de facto our learning has been the adaptation of a nervous system to respond physically to vocal signals, heard or imagined

c) originally language had to be invented and its development went on for millennia

there is an advantage in having a ready-made language since thereby most of the labor of perceiving and attending has already been done for you

d) the development of a language is never over until it is dead and forgotten

"Awful conflagration of the steam boat Lexington in Long Island Sound on the Evening of Monday Jan 13th, 1840, by which melancholy occurrence more than 100 persons perished."

Noam Chomsky's generative grammar: people children make up endless excellent sentences out of words they never have heard or seen conjoined before

2

The censor also [patterns] and [selects] the elements that enter consciousness

Distinguish positive and negative aspects

Positive element: vertical finality, teleology

consciously we try to understand

we check the sufficiency of evidence for judgment

we deliberate whether X is good, worth while, fun

over our bodily movements: in general control is despotic;

in particular cases it is political; in intermediate, acquired habit

what comes into consciousness accords with orientation of consciousness

inquiry, insight needs image, eventually image will pop up (Archimedean

judgment, review of evidence, memory will throw up fav unfav instan

deliberation, conscience makes cowards of us all, good bad conscien

Aberration: repression, what is repressed is mostly rage,

flying into a tantrum gets one into trouble

But what is unexpressed one way, may seek other outlets -- symptoms

facial tics, nervous stomach

Developments that are once psychological physiological social: sex

only partial development: trouble, symptoms, &c

- 3 Is there an operative ~~xxx~~ conceptual framework usually not attended to and prior to insight.

Historicity: all that is true ~~x~~ about your experience, your language, your mind, your heart,

because you were born at a certain place and time of certain parents, attended certain schools, has certain companions, friends

Human knowledge is not a personal achievement

it is a common fund to which all contribute a very little at most and from which all may draw to the limit of their diligence intelligence &c

it is a common fund that has been developing for millions of years

Personal development

first from above downwards: parents teachers books ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ later, as we have developed, from personal experience insight j d intermediate, give and take, learning with from one's peers the spontaneous process of teaching and learning

- 4 Does understanding sometimes precede insight  
other people's understanding, in so far as you learn from them your own understanding, insight enters into the habitual texture of one's mind (Insight 6)

- 5 Is understanding always an act  
at emergence it is an act  
thereafter it is habitual (Archimedes did not have to rediscover principle of specific gravity each time he ~~xx~~ taught it)

"Capacity to go on": heuristic structure  
you know how to go about the investigation